



## BETHEL PUBLIC LIBRARY

189 Greenwood Avenue, Bethel, CT 06801

203-794-8756 Fax 203-794-8761

[www.bethellibrary.org](http://www.bethellibrary.org)

February 16, 2017

Members of the Appropriations Committee  
Hartford, CT

To whom it may concern:

I am writing this letter with regards to the Governor's biennial budget that proposes to eliminate C-CARD funding for public libraries, and perhaps to eliminate the C-CARD statute (CGS 11-31b) as well.

For Bethel Library, C-Card reimbursement has been between \$2-3,000 per year. This is not a lot of money, but it does help us to purchase things that are not in our operating budget, and we otherwise could not afford. In recent years, C-Card funds were used to replace the Library's network server, purchase scanners for use by our patrons, replace the mixer that is necessary to run our projection equipment, and have a one year subscription to Survey Monkey so the Library could conduct a series of surveys as part of its long range planning process.

Losing the monetary incentive to participate in reciprocal borrowing (C-Card) would be a hardship for many of the state's smaller libraries, but more importantly, if the statute goes away, libraries may be inclined to restrict or stop reciprocal borrowing altogether, especially larger libraries that receive much larger reimbursement checks than Bethel.

Reciprocal borrowing (C-Card) is the practice of allowing out of town patrons to borrow materials from your library. C-Card statute states that a CT resident may have only 1 library card that must be from the hometown library, but the patron may use that card in any of the state's public libraries. C-Card was implemented in 1971. To get libraries on board with this radical concept of resource sharing -- especially in New England where resource sharing can be difficult to achieve -- the state implemented the statute and provided a reimbursement incentive to libraries for every C-Card transaction.

From personal experience, I know the impact that this has had on both libraries and patrons. I'm dating myself here, but to illustrate a point, I'll risk it. As a high school student attending Danbury High School prior to 1971, but living in New Fairfield -- a very small town at the time, I often had to use the Danbury Library for homework and research assignments because the New Fairfield library lacked the resources I needed. I was not allowed to borrow books from the library because I did not live in Danbury -- even though New Fairfield students attended Danbury High School. Imagine being 16 or 17 years old and being stuck in the library all day on a Saturday doing homework because you couldn't take the books home. If only C-Card had come along a year or two earlier!

Even after C-Card did come into effect, a decade later in the early 80's when I started my career, one of my first jobs required fostering interlibrary cooperation and convincing those libraries not quite on board yet to allow others to borrow from their libraries. It was a long fought battle, but finally by the mid-80's all of the public libraries in the state had agreed to allow reciprocal borrowing. Today, we take it for granted.

There are literally millions of C-Card transactions every year. Realistically, I cannot see the practice of reciprocal borrowing going away overnight. But if both funding and the statute are eliminated, it will contribute to the erosion of the spirit of cooperation that libraries have long enjoyed for several decades. We've already seen the beginnings of this with reduced C-Car (DeliverIT) delivery service due to a reduction in funding last year from the state, while the number of books transported between libraries continues to increase.

C-Car and C-Card go hand in hand. One doesn't work very well without the other. Adequate funding from the state to sustain both these services is essential. It's not helpful to be able to borrow from other libraries if the items can't be delivered in a timely fashion. And it truly would be detrimental to curtail one or both of these critical services for libraries because there is no funding and/or the statutes that govern these services are eliminated. Imagine the PR nightmare trying to explain to our patrons why they can no longer borrow from other libraries after decades of enjoying this service. They aren't aware of the politics involved, but they certainly will be aware and extremely unhappy if the service stops.

At a time when budgets continue to be tight, and when resource sharing between cities and towns is being promoted, it doesn't make sense to eliminate funding for the two core services that have enabled the state's libraries to engage in successful resource sharing for decades -- services that truly enhance the lives of our patrons and are very much appreciated by them.

Thank you for your time.

Lynn M. Rosato  
Bethel Library Director